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Egypt-Israel Relations



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EDITOR'S NOTE

*This is the full text of a statement made by Ambassador
Eban before the Security Council of the United Nations
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Egypt-Israel Relations

The tensions on the frontier between Egypt and Israel are revealed with deep gravity in the Reports presented to the Security Council by General Burns. The armed clash on February 28 illustrates the dangers arising from those tensions. On that date a series of long-standing antagonisms and immediate provocations exploded into a conflict with regrettably serious loss of life.

Such clashes do not spring from the empty air. They arise from morbid conditions of international relations. In this case, they show a profound weakness in the current operation of the armistice system which Egypt and Israel established six years ago, on the solemn understanding that they would move forward on its basis towards permanent peace.

The relations between Egypt and Israel are always sensitively reflected at the point where the territories of the two countries meet near Gaza. There are 166 miles of frontier between Egypt and Israel; but our populated areas confront each other only opposite the Gaza strip. In one belt of territory, 10 miles in width east of Gaza, there are 70 Israeli settlements, mainly pioneering communities engaged in an arduous effort to bring water and fertility to the northern Negev.

The Gaza strip is an Egyptian controlled salient pointing as a sharp finger into Israel's coastal plain. In terms of history, it is a relic of the aggression of 1948, in which Egyptian forces crossed the established international frontier, in defiance of Security Council resolutions, and came within nine miles of Tel Aviv. The whole of Israel is a frontier area, with practically no hinterland; for nowhere in the country can a man live and work many miles from the shadow of hostile Arab guns. But this fact, and the consequences that flow from it, are especially marked near Gaza where a frontier created by recent war divides two closely settled regions.

Egyptian "Belligerency"

Against this complex geographical background, the Security Council will recall the political relationships between the two States whose armed forces clashed at Gaza on February 28. The unusual character of these relationships has been revealed to the Security Council in its previous debates on disputes between Egypt and Israel. At the root of these tensions lie a theory and practice of belligerency. Egypt considers and proclaims that there is "a state of war." In the name of that "state of war," Egypt asserts a "right" to perform hostile acts of her choice against Israel. On the other hand, Egypt claims immunity from any hostile response emanating from Israel. This is the doctrine of unilateral belligerency; and it has no parallel or precedent in the jurisprudence of nations.

It is another principle of the Egyptian position, and has been so stated at this table, that decisions of the Security Council relating to Israel have no binding force upon Egypt. On the other hand, the Security Council's authority is today invoked to protect Egypt against any reaction which its active prosecution of the "state of war" may elicit.

It would be strictly and scientifically accurate to describe the essence of the Egyptian position in two sentences: — Egypt may behave towards Israel as though there is war. Israel must behave towards Egypt as though there is peace.

Tensions of Past Six Months

Now this doctrine of a state of war is not a mere juridical theory. It is carried out in practice by relentless hostility on land and sea; by military incursions; by organized murder, sabotage and theft; by maritime blockade; and by open threats against Israel's territory, integrity and political independence. These policies, which have been maintained by Egypt in varying measure since 1949, have been aggravated in the past six months to a degree previously unknown. I shall show that at no time since the signature of the Armistice has the pressure of Egyptian hostility been exerted upon Israel with such provocative intensity as during this period. One index of this increased hostility can be found in the fact that while in 1953 there

were 5 armed clashes involving regular armed forces between Egypt and Israel, in 1954 there were 71 such clashes.

The source of this hostility, the centre from which the violence is organized and directed, is the Egyptian military headquarters at Gaza.

The Egyptian representative has spoken as if the Gaza clash erupted suddenly out of a serene and peaceful background, without origin or cause. The situation now before the Council cannot be remotely understood, still less fairly judged, unless this misrepresentation is corrected. For its correction we have recourse, not to the subjective claims of interested parties, but to the records of the Mixed Armistice Commission and the Reports of the United Nations Chief of Staff.

The Reports submitted by General Burns to the Security Council on November 16, 1954 and March 17, 1955, tabulate the complaints investigated by the Mixed Armistice Commission during the two periods of review. The final columns of these tables specify 14 decisions of the Mixed Armistice Commission condemning Egypt—more than twice the number of decisions recorded against Israel during those periods. This fact is impressive enough in itself. It becomes all the more significant when it is observed that the few violations ascribed in these tables to Israel arose mostly from immediate reponse to Egyptian firing. For in the application of the Armistice Agreement, differentiation between firing in aggression, and firing in response to aggression is not always considered possible. General Burns refers in page 5 of the March 17 Report to this anomaly, which my Government has often criticized. The result is that the ratio of violations in Egypt's disfavor, serious as it is in the Reports and the tables, actually underestimates Egypt's responsibility.

To illustrate this point I take the conclusions of the Mixed Armistice Commission at a recent meeting on March 7, 1955. On that date the Commission adopted a gravely worded resolution against Egypt for the outrageous and unprovoked attack in Rehovot to which I shall later refer. But it also had under discussion a complaint of firing by the Egyptian Army at an Israeli patrol which managed, by returning the fire, to save itself from destruction. The Mixed Armis-

tice Commission resolution duly records a second verdict against Egypt on the grounds that the

"Egyptian Army position fired at the Israeli security patrol with automatic weapons, rifles and 3 inch mortars at 0830 *local time*."

So the Commission certified the time at the firing. But another resolution finds, quite accurately, that:

"the Israel patrol opened fire at 0845 *local time*."

Thus the refusal of the Israel patrol to perish is recorded as a violation of the General Armistice Agreement, even though the Mixed Armistice Commission itself had determined clearly where the original initiative for firing lay. If we were to follow up all such cases the preponderance of Egyptian violations would be greater than the 3 to 1 ratio in Egypt's disfavor appearing in the Mixed Armistice Commission records over recent months, over the period of August 1954 and March 1955.

As it is, however, in the cases examined and adjudicated between August 1, 1954 and March 7, 1955, the Mixed Armistice Commission, under United Nations chairmanship, has found Egypt guilty of violating the Armistice on no less than 40 occasions, including the 14 recorded in the two Reports before the Security Council which cover incidents occurring between September 1, 1954 and March 1, 1955, mainly incidents discussed in emergency meetings rather than in regular meetings of the Mixed Armistice Commission.

An Account of Egyptian Violations

But even these statistics do not give an adequately vivid picture of the murderous harassment launched from Gaza against Israel in the period leading up to February 28. I therefore invite the Security Council to examine the more serious Egyptian violations organized from Gaza during the past six months; and to do so with a clear perception of the effects created by this torrent of assault on the lives of pioneering men and women striving to establish and maintain their lives in the regions east of the Gaza zone. I have circulated a map to enable the examination to be carried forward more graphically.

The story begins on September 5, 1954, with an Egyptian attack resulting in the murder of an Israeli tractor driver at Ruhama. On September 13, the Mixed Armistice Commission condemned Egypt for a "flagrant violation" of the Armistice Agreement.

On September 7, 1954, the pipeline was blown up in the vicinity of Nirim where, with endless patience, sacrifice and toil, a supply of water has been organized to serve all the settlements of the parched Negev. On September 13, 1954, the Mixed Armistice Commission adopted a resolution of which the penultimate paragraph reads:

"The Mixed Armistice Commission

"Decides that this aggressive hostile and sabotage act against Israel is a flagrant breach of Article II, para. 2 of the General Armistice Agreement by Egypt;

"Calls upon Egypt to take measures to stop these attacks across the international frontier."

On September 13, a Bedouin camp at Be'er Malka in Israel was attacked; On November 16 the Mixed Armistice Commission condemned Egypt for this violation.

On September 20, a group of armed infiltrators wounded a tractor driver and blew up a home in Hatzav.

On September 22, an Egyptian outpost fired at an Israeli patrol across the demarcation line.

On September 25, a very serious Egyptian attack at Beth Shikmah resulted in the death of two Israelis and the wounding of two others. The Mixed Armistice Commission formulated a strong condemnation of Egypt for this assault.

On September 28, Egyptian troops, after crossing Israeli territory, attacked an Israeli patrol. For this attack Egypt was condemned by the Mixed Armistice Commission on December 13, 1954.

On October 5, 1954, the Commission condemned Egypt twice for violations of the Armistice through infiltration from Gaza between August 13 and 15, 1954.

On November 9, the Mixed Armistice Commission condemned Egypt twice for two separate incidents of infiltration in August 1954.

On December 13, 1954, the Mixed Armistice Commission condemned Egypt for five separate violations of the Armistice which had taken place in September 1954.

In the early part of October, Egyptian hostility towards Israel found its most cogent expression in the piratical seizure of the *Bat Galim* which still lies with its cargo in the illicit possession of the Egyptian authorities. The Security Council is still seized of Egypt's contemptuous defiance of its own will. Not content, however, with maritime belligerency, Egypt moved towards the end of that month to renew its pressure on Israel's frontier. Thus, on October 25, Egyptian forces blew up the pipeline at Mefalsim, a violation for which Egypt was condemned by the Mixed Armistice Commission on October 28.

The next day, on October 29, an attack was launched at Shiftah with three men wounded on the Israeli side. The Mixed Armistice Commission condemned Egypt for this violation, and again for an attack with automatic weapons near Nirim the following day, October 30.

The month of November opened with an attack by Egyptian forces on Patish, where houses were blown up, resulting in the condemnation of Egypt by the Mixed Armistice Commission on November 5.

On November 7 a serious clash took place between an Israeli patrol and a group of armed marauders who had crossed the demarcation line. Another serious clash with armed marauders took place three days later.

On December 24, 1954, an Egyptian platoon invaded the demilitarized zone of Nitsana and entrenched itself there. For this act of invasion Egypt was condemned by the Mixed Armistice Commission on January 3, 1955.

It should be noted that the official military character of the Egyptian attacks was now becoming increasingly evident and, indeed, unconcealed. On January 21, 1955, Egyptian regular troops attacked a position close to Nir Yitzchak, wounding two Israeli soldiers and killing another. For this violation Egypt was condemned in the strongest terms on January 24, 1955.

On that very day, however, Egyptian forces had launched another attack. This time, the target was Ein Hashlosha. One Israeli tractor driver was killed and one wounded. On January 27, Egypt was condemned by the Mixed Armistice Commission for this attack.

On February 1, 1955, an Egyptian attack took place near Nachal Oz where one Israeli soldier was wounded. The Mixed Armistice Commission condemned this Egyptian assault.

On February 22, 1955, an Egyptian army post fired on an Israeli patrol which was approaching a large group of infiltrators who were plundering the harvest in the region of Nir Yitzchak. Egyptian troops opened fire with automatic rifles and 3 inch mortars. On March 7, 1955, Egypt was condemned for this violation. I have already pointed out that Commission determined that on this occasion the Israel patrol had returned the fire 15 minutes later; and General Burns has pointed out in this Report that this too ranks as a violation. The order of firing is, however, established in the Mixed Armistice Commission resolution.

On February 25, 1955, a bicycle rider in Israel was killed by an Egyptian intelligence sabotage unit, about one mile west of Rehovot, 24 miles from the Egyptian frontier. This assault was traced to the Egyptian authorities in Gaza and the Mixed Armistice Commission issued a vehement resolution condemning Egypt on March 7, 1955. Only two days previously, on February 23, this Egyptian intelligence group had penetrated as far as Rishon le Zion, 29 miles inside Israel, and had stolen documents.

Armistice Commission Condemns Egyptian Aggression

The list which I have read is surely sufficient in itself to dispose of any extraordinary version which would assert that the period leading up to the Gaza clash was one of comparative quiet. The Egyptian objective was clearly to create an inferno of suspense and insecurity in the northern Negev, to blow up farm homes when built and water pipes when laid — in short to prevent the peaceful settlement and habitation of the northern Negev area.

The records show how the Mixed Armistice Commission began to perceive that it was faced here not merely by specific incidents, but by a consistent policy of harassment. The resolutions began to express a mounting concern at a general tendency on the part of Egypt to replace her armistice obligations by open and unrestrained hostility. Thus, on September 13, 1954, the Commission had con-

firmed the well organized military character of the attack launched on September 5. The Commission's Resolution states:

"The Mixed Armistice Commission

"Notes the existing serious situation along the demarcation line between Egypt and Israel . . . and condemns Egypt for the above act and calls on the Egyptian authorities to take immediate steps to stop at once such or other violations of the General Armistice Agreement."

On the same day the Commission adopted a Resolution concerning the blowing up of the main water pipeline in the Negev. The Security Council is doubtless aware of the importance attached to the water system in Israel, especially in the arid area of the Negev. A sense of deep shock and indignation runs through our farming community and, indeed, through the country, when large volumes of water are wasted through deliberate and purposeful sabotage. The Mixed Armistice Commission caught something of the spirit in which water problems arise in the farming communities of the South when it adopted a resolution on September 13 in the following terms:

"The Commission

"Notes once again with great concern that despite the obligations imposed on Egypt by the General Armistice Agreement and a number of M.A.C. decisions, an end has not yet been put to aggressive, hostile and sabotage acts against Israel;

"Notes further with extremely grave concern the serious condition prevailing along the demarcation line resulting from these acts;

"Condemns Egypt for the above aggressive acts against Israel and calls on the Egyptian authorities to terminate finally and immediately all such acts of aggression."

How little the Egyptian Government was influenced by this authoritative appeal against its policy can be deduced from the text which the Mixed Armistice Commission had to adopt on October 28 when an armed and well trained group again, in the Commission's words:

"blew up (the water line) by heavy charge of high explosives . . . resulting in very serious damage to the pipeline, installation and water supply."

On that occasion the Commission resolved:

"Notes with great concern the repeated acts of planned demolition of main water pipelines in Israel by well-trained and organized armed groups coming from Egyptian controlled territory;

"Further notes with extremely great concern the serious situation prevailing along the demarcation line resulting from repeated aggressive acts by Egypt against Israel;

"Notes once again with great concern that despite the obligations imposed on Egypt by the General Armistice Agreement, and a number of M.A.C. Resolutions, an end has not yet been put to aggressive sabotage acts against Israel;

"Decides that the above aggressive sabotage act against Israel constitutes a flagrant breach of Article II, paragraph 2 of the General Armistice Agreement by Egypt;

"Calls upon the Egyptian authorities to stop finally and immediately all such acts of aggression against Israel and to implement fully the General Armistice Agreement."

The military character of the Egyptian attacks was clearly attested again in the Resolution of the Mixed Armistice Commission adopted on January 24, 1955, which stated in part:

"The Commission:

"Finds that . . . an Egyptian military patrol, . . . commanded by an officer, attacked an Israeli post in Israel, manned by three Israeli soldiers, . . . killing one and wounding the other two . . . ;

"Notes that the Armistice demarcation line was clearly marked near the place of the attack;

"Decides that this aggressive action carried out by the above-mentioned unit of the Egyptian Army commanded by an officer is a flagrant violation of Article II, para. 2 of the General Armistice Agreement by Egypt;

"Notes with extremely grave concern this aggressive action, and

"Calls upon the Egyptian authorities to terminate these aggressive acts against Israel."

On January 27, 1955, the Mixed Armistice Commission again developed its condemnation of Egypt into a generalized criticism:

"Notes with grave concern the serious situation prevailing along the Gaza strip resulting from these repeated attacks;

"Notes once again with extremely grave concern that despite the obligation imposed on Egypt by the General Armistice Agreement and a number of Mixed Armistice Commission resolutions these penetrations and killings of Israeli citizens have not been terminated."

The Security Council in our judgment would do well to consider the language in which the Mixed Armistice Commission interpreted the situation on the days immediately preceding the Gaza clash. On March 7, 1955, the Commission adopted and published its Resolution on the incidents which took place in the third week of February. This is surely the authoritative answer to the question which arises in many minds as to the immediate situation and atmosphere out of which the Gaza clash developed. Here is how the Mixed Armistice Commission describes the position which faced Israel in the Gaza area in the last week of February, 1955:

"Notes once again with concern the continuous crossings of the Armistice demarcation line from Egyptian controlled territory into Israel by infiltrators and their illegal actions in Israel;

"Notes further with grave concern the repeated firing from permanent Egyptian military positions on Israel routine patrols operating within Israel territory;

"Notes again with grave concern that despite the obligations imposed on Egypt by the General Armistice Agreement and many Mixed Armistice Commission decisions an end has not yet been put to the aggressive and hostile acts by Egypt against Israel;

"Decides that these aggressive actions constitute a flagrant violation of Article II, para. 2 and Article V para. 4 of the General Armistice Agreement by Egypt;

"Call upon the Egyptian authorities to terminate immediately these aggressive actions by Egyptian military positions and the continuous infiltration into Israel."

Deep Penetrations Into Israel

In summarizing Egyptian violations I referred especially to the assault near Rehovot, where an Israeli citizen was killed by an Egyptian armed group within the heart of Israel, 24 miles from the Egyptian frontier, at the beginning of the last week of February 1955. This came two days after the penetration of an Egyptian intelli-

gence unit — the same unit which penetrated into Rishon le Zion, 29 miles within Israel. This is the northernmost thrust from Gaza into Israel which is marked on the map.

It is difficult for me to find words with which to portray the degree of horror and alarm which this attack evoked. A unit of the Egyptian headquarters at Gaza had penetrated 29 miles into Israel and spent four days indulging in espionage and murder at Rishon le Zion and Rehovot. Never since the Armistice was signed had there been a penetration of such depth by an armed group of one party into the territory of another. It revealed an audacious quality of dynamic, purposeful hostility and of utter contempt for Israel's territorial integrity. Not a single citizen of Israel could fail, on reading of this event, to feel the cold wind of his own vulnerability. If the Rehovot episode could be repeated then no life in Israel was safe from a far-ranging Egyptian assault. When we think of the solemnity with which the Mixed Armistice Commission had urged Egypt to desist from these acts, and the contempt which those decisions had encountered; when we reflect that Egypt was known by everybody in Israel after the Bat Galim affair to have at least an equal contempt for the Security Council whose decisions Egypt has frankly declared to be non-binding upon herself, it is not surprising that our people became permeated by the strong resolve to resist further assaults launched under the directing hand of Egyptian headquarters operating a few miles across the frontier.

The Rehovot attack is described in a Mixed Armistice Commission Resolution in the following terms:

"The Mixed Armistice Commission,

"Finds that a group of 3 armed men with Sten guns crossed the Armistice demarcation line from Egyptian controlled territory and penetrated to a great depth into Israel.

"Finds further that the above-mentioned armed group at approximately 1930 hours local time, on February 25, 1955, wantonly murdered an unarmed Israeli civilian, riding a bicycle on a main road near Rehovoth, 40 kilometers inside Israel.

"Decides that the above aggressive acts against Israel constitute a flagrant violation of the General Armistice Agreement by Egypt.

"Notes with grave concern the serious situation prevailing along the demarcation line.

AUGUST 1954 ————— FEBRUARY 1955

SCALE 1:250,000

SCALE 1:250,000

REFERENCE

PIPELINE

AREA OF ATTACK

ATTACK FROM GAZA

EGYPT

HASHEMITE JORDAN KINGDOM



MEDITERRANEAN SEA

SRAEL

HA-SHE-ITE JORDAN KINGDOM

*106 Marauders Were Arrested During This Period
By The Israel Police*

"Calls upon the Egyptian authorities to terminate finally and immediately all such acts of aggression and hostility against Israel and to fully respect and implement the General Armistice Agreement."

The Egyptian Record Summarized

Is it seriously possible for anyone in full knowledge of these denunciations of Egypt by the Mixed Armistice Commission to assert that the Egyptian military headquarters on February 28 was the innocent victim of an attack which it had done nothing to provoke? If the Mixed Armistice Commission is held to be an authority on the Gaza incident itself, we cannot ignore the authority of its voice when it speaks to us time and time again of Egyptian aggression before the Gaza incident.

And what the Mixed Armistice Commission tells us is tragically clear. It tells us that the period immediately preceding the Gaza outbreak was marked by "repeated firing from permanent Egyptian military positions on Israel patrols operating within Israel territory"; by "continuous crossings from Egyptian controlled territory into Israel by infiltrators and their illegal actions in Israel"; by actions in which Egyptian armed groups "crossed the line and penetrated to a great depth into Israel"; by "repeated acts of aggression and hostility against Israel" which the Commission "called upon Egypt" (on September 13, October 28, January 24, January 27, and March 7) "to terminate finally and immediately." We are also informed by the Commission at its meeting on March 7 that "despite the obligations imposed on Egypt by the General Armistice Agreement and many Mixed Armistice Commission decisions an end has not yet been put to the aggressive and hostile acts by Egypt against Israel." So much for the language of the Reports of the Mixed Armistice Commission.

The Security Council also has before it two Reports from the Chief of Staff. The first refers to "a recrudescence of incidents mostly in Israel-controlled territory (i.e. from Egypt), some of them of a serious nature." The second Report, referring specifically to the Gaza incident, writes that "infiltration from Egyptian controlled territory has not been the only cause of present tension, *but has*

undoubtedly been one of its main causes." The Report conveys the astonishing assertion by Egyptian authorities that "persons committing murders and sabotage (in Israel) were being inspired, paid and equipped by political elements in Egypt inimical to the Government and desirous of aggravating the border situation." Whatever the truth of the explanation, the murders and sabotage thus candidly avowed emanated from Gaza headquarters, for whose activities the Egyptian Government is responsible. The Report describes a remarkable intensity of activities in intelligence and sabotage, and states that,

"the Gaza incident could appear in this context as retaliation for the spying, sabotage and murders for which the Egyptian military intelligence was said to be responsible."

The Report advocates that the Egyptian authorities should take certain concrete and specific measures against infiltrators, since otherwise,

"The Israelis refuse to believe that a serious attempt is being made to prevent the depredations which eventually build up tension to a dangerous point."

With all this accumulated evidence of Egyptian aggression before us inscribed in the Mixed Armistice Commission Resolutions and in the Chief of Staff's Reports, is it not incredible to hear an Egyptian suggestion that the Security Council should ignore everything that the Mixed Armistice Commission and the Chief of Staff have said about this persistent Egyptian responsibility, and should deplore or condemn only the response which these Egyptian violations elicited, after they had been patiently endured week by week and month upon month?

The Security Council will note that there is nothing in the records of the Mixed Armistice Commission in its consideration of Israel's attitude, to compare with its generalized criticism of Egypt for a constant and well sustained policy of military pressures against Israel. Indeed, the Egyptian representative himself was unable to make out any case against Israel for the tensions existing in the Gaza region before February 28. He therefore went shopping around all the other parts of the Middle East, reaching back four years in an

effort to concoct a selection of Israeli actions which might balance the story of recent Egyptian provocations in the Gaza region. The Egyptian representative would not have let his feet stray into the Huleh marshes in 1951 if he could have found any serious break in Israeli restraint on the Egyptian frontier in the period under review.

Indeed, the one-sided character of Egyptian violations emerges clearly from an analysis of the 36 Egyptian complaints listed in the Chief of Staff's Report of March 17.

Nine of these concerned alleged overflights of Egyptian territory. The complaints were so inconsequential and unsubstantiated that they never reached the point of being voted upon in the Mixed Armistice Commission.

Nine complaints refer to alleged firing across the demarcation line. In three the Mixed Armistice Commission found no evidence; in two the Egyptian accusation failed of adoption; in one no investigation was requested by Egypt and in one alone Egypt secured a verdict on a technical breach of the Agreement, in that Israelis who were fired on in an incident for which Egypt was condemned, returned Egyptian fire 15 minutes later. I have discussed this incident already.

There are six complaints on alleged crossings of the demarcation line. Three of these refer to crossings by Israeli Bedouin to attack Egyptian Bedouin who had assaulted them.

Two complaints refer to the legitimate expulsion of infiltrators from Israel territory. The three complaints on alleged crossings of Israeli soldiers into Egyptian territory were not deemed by Egypt adequate to warrant an emergency meeting of the Mixed Armistice Commission.

When we compare this list of complaints with the earnest, grave far-reaching decisions against Egypt which I have quoted, the balance of responsibility for the tension preceding February 28 becomes amply clear. That the Gaza incident is a tragic result and not a primary cause of tension is particularly well-known to all who have followed these affairs from close at hand in recent weeks.

In the official transcript of the meeting of the Special Committee of the Egyptian-Israeli Mixed Armistice Commission held on March 11, 1955, we find the Chairman addressing the parties as follows:

"I think all of us realize that this did not arise out of a blue sky, and certainly no report or evidence before the Security Council by any responsible party would give that impression."

Addressing the Egyptian representative, who tried to divorce the situation created by the Gaza clash from the situation that existed before it, the Chairman stated:

"You do not mean to say that there was not a serious situation before. You don't say that paragraph 6 (of the Mixed Armistice Commission Resolution on the Gaza attack) bears that interpretation . . ."

How serious the situation had become before February 28 is illustrated by the following facts which I summarize:

During the period between August 1954 and March 1955:

- (a) The Mixed Armistice Commission condemned Egypt 40 times;
- (b) There were 9 cases of Egyptian sabotage and mine-laying;
- (c) There were 34 clashes with regular and irregular forces;
- (d) 1006 cases of incursions and infiltrations from across the Egyptian border into Israel were recorded by the Israel police;
- (e) 106 marauders were arrested during this period by the Israel police;

A new and sinister feature of recent developments has been the emphasis by Egyptian headquarters at Gaza on intelligence sabotage operations. I have already quoted the Mixed Armistice Commission's denunciations of some of these activities, but not all of them, as the Report points out, have come before the Mixed Armistice Commission. At the end of September 1954, a group sent from Gaza to commit sabotage was caught after it had sniped at farmers and blown up houses in the border settlements. In December 1954, four youths were caught trying to get military information in Israel. They admitted that they had been trained and instructed by Egyptian intelligence officers in Gaza. For the second time within a month the main pipeline near Nir Am was blown up on September 7 by a group of trained saboteurs. On October 25, as I have already recorded, a similiar attack on the pipeline took place near Mefalsim.

These incidents gave rise to the Mixed Armistice Commission's expression of

"grave concern over the repeated acts of planned demolition in Israel by well-trained, armed and organized groups coming from Egyptian controlled territory."

The Chief of Staff's report refers to a list of intelligence operations conducted from Egyptian territory against Israel, as published in the Hebrew newspaper *Lamerhav*. I should like to make clear that this is not a mere newspaper publication, but an authorized statement by the General Staff of the Israeli defence forces. It therefore has a far greater official status than would belong merely to a newspaper publication.

Israel Appeals to U. N. and Powers

On many occasions during the latter months of 1954 and the early part of this year the Government of Israel sought remedy for this situation by diplomatic means. Our leaders and representatives constantly engaged the Chief of Staff in discussions of Egyptian aggression, and pointed out the impossibility of suffering these assaults indefinitely without response. We heard periodically from General Burns that he had duly transmitted our expressions of deep concern and his own desire to see armed marauding brought to an end.

The Governments of the United States of America and of the United Kingdom also considered the problem serious enough to warrant the use of their good offices within recent months; and the Government of Israel received information from each of those two Governments, as well as from the Government of Turkey, during the period between October 1954 and February 1955, concerning the representations which they had made in Cairo in support of the appeals of the Mixed Armistice Commission calling for the cessation of assaults and sabotage against Israel from the Gaza strip.

It is impossible for us to imagine that representatives on the Security Council, or the Security Council itself, can fail to include in their expressions of view a strong condemnation of this campaign of hostility organized in Gaza, to which Israel was subjected between

the summer of 1954 and the end of February this year. For the connection between these events and the Gaza episode is nothing less than the direct and compelling relationship of cause and effect. But for the Egyptian aggressions which I have partially enumerated; but for the persistent rejection both of Mixed Armistice Commission resolutions and of the representations and warning from the powers, there is not the remotest chance that any event would have occurred which would have brought the Security Council into session this week. Nor can the Security Council, which is charged by members of the United Nations with the duty to consider international "situations" and "disputes," fail to evince an interest in the general context of relationships of which Gaza is a single reflection in a particular local facet. For scarcely less alarming than the acts of violence which leaped at Israel's throat from the Gaza frontier over the past six months have been the ominous words of direct menace which furnished the ideology and philosophy of these Egyptian attacks.

Egyptian Threats

On January 28, 1955, Major Salem, Egyptian Minister of National Guidance, stated publicly:

"Egypt will strive to erase the shame of the Palestine war. Even if Israel should fulfill all U.N. resolutions it will not sign a peace with her. Even if Israel should consist only of Tel-Aviv we shall never put up with that."

On October 15, 1954, the official mouthpiece of the Egyptian regime, "El-Gomhouria," wrote:

"Egypt and the Arabs must turn in the name of humanity and culture to all nations of the world who will aid in wiping Israel off the face of the map because of its barbarism."

On November 16, 1954, the "Saut el Arab" (The "Voice of the Arabs"), the official broadcasting station, declared:

"Egypt sees Israel as a cancer endangering the Arab peoples. Egypt is the physician who can uproot this cancer. Egypt does not forget that it is her obligation to take revenge and she is mobilizing all her forces in anticipation of the hoped-for day."

Egypt's Expansionist Claims Revealed

A most important and conspicuous development took place only three days ago, on March 20, when Major Salem, a leading member of the Egyptian Government, indeed the Minister of National Guidance, revealed the underlying purpose of Egyptian harassment in the Negev. The object is to impede the development of the Negev in order to bring about its annexation to Egypt. This insolent territorial claim put forward by Major Salem in the clear light of day, is perhaps the ultimate source of tension on our southern frontier. Let me say that Egypt, or any other Arab state, will not get the Negev, nor is our territory available for bargaining in discussions of regional defense organizations. The only result of this aggressive Egyptian pronouncement will be to fortify the passion and tenacity with which the people of Israel will defend every inch of their small territory in any arena in which it may be threatened. But is there a single precedent in contemporary international life for a state openly to assert a claim to half the territory of its neighbor, to launch dozens of assaults upon that territory against severe international condemnation, and on the first occasion when it provokes resistance, to run for protection to the very Security Council whose authority it had repudiated a few weeks before?

My Government, as it listens to Egyptian leaders constantly urging Israel's destruction, often faces the question whether it can possibly owe obligations to a government which envisages her relationship with us in these terms. No other state in the world has our experience of hearing its extinction or mutilation threatened and promised from neighboring territory but a few miles away. These statements and territorial claims represent the political motive of the violent incursions by Egyptian forces and armed groups. The reverberations of these statements, which are very wide and deep in Israel and the Middle East, evoke in our mind within every specific armed assault by Egypt the basic questions of Israel's survival and territorial integrity.

The Problem for Other States

There is indeed something so unique in Israel's position, surrounded on four sides by hostile neighbors whose converging as-

for the conclusion of non-aggression pacts, a proposal made in full responsibility and formality last October from the rostrum of the United Nations, was summarily rejected by Egypt's representatives.

Until such time as progress is made toward peace, it becomes increasingly urgent to correct the defects and imperfections of the armistice system. The main breach in this system is the proclamation of a state of belligerency and the application of that doctrine in acts of war by sea and land.

My Government is prepared to give an assurance that if no hostile act is carried out by Egypt against Israel, then no hostile act of any kind will be carried out by Israel against Egypt. Indeed, this is our minimal plea to Egypt: Prevent your armed forces and armed groups from crossing our frontiers; stop firing on our patrols and villages; cease blowing up our water supplies; abolish these activities of sabotage, demolition and murder; do not send people either into the heart of our country or into the border areas for the purpose of destruction and pillage; refrain from threatening our violent extinction or laying claim to our territory; renounce the blockade to which your right has been internationally denied; stop making the harassment and provocation of Israel a theme of your national policy. By such simple renunciation of a useless hostility, Egypt can ensure on our part a profound, unvarying and universal respect for her peace and integrity.

Questions to Egypt

It is fitting, six years after the Armistice, for Egypt and Israel themselves to define the basis of their relationship under the Agreement by which they are bound. We therefore ask:

Will the Egyptian Government agree to proclaim the abolition of a state of war and of all actions and measures carried out on the basis of the existence of a state of war?

Will the Government of Egypt join with us in a declaration of readiness to carry out all the obligations under the Armistice Agreement and all decisions of the Security Council adopted in relation to that agreement?

Will the Egyptian Government join us in declaring its fidelity to that provision of the Armistice Agreement which calls on us to make a transition to permanent peace?

Will the Government of Egypt join us in a declaration of fidelity to the provisions of the United Nations Charter calling upon us to settle all disputes by peaceful means and to refrain from the threat or use of force against the territorial integrity or political independence of any state?

The acceptance of such a code of Egyptian-Israeli relationships would not take us beyond our existing commitments under the Armistice Agreement and the Charter of the United Nations. These are all things that we have agreed to do already. But under the burden of belligerent doctrines the pacific obligations which we have undertaken have become lost to sight; and the insidious fallacy of a state of war has spread its contagion both to the theory and to the practice of our relationships. If the Government of Egypt, through its delegation, is able at any stage to give an affirmative answer to these questions, my Government would make whole-hearted response.

Conclusion

The Security Council in our judgement can do much to withstand the distortion of the Armistice Agreement by the doctrine of unilateral belligerency. It must be clear to everybody studying the Reports and tables and the Mixed Armistice Commission resolutions which I have quoted here, that for the Council to confine its judgement or criticism to the Gaza incident alone would be gravely prejudicial and inequitable. It would certainly be an inappropriate commentary on official reports which show Egyptian violations to have been more numerous and more generalized than any Israeli reactions which followed them.

My delegation feels justified in seeking a condemnation by the Security Council of the Egyptian incursions, murders, demolitions and sabotage activities described in General Burn's Report as "a main cause of present tension" and in the Mixed Armistice Commission resolutions as "repeated aggressive acts by Egypt against Israel."

We seek confirmation of the Security Council's view that the claim or practice of active belligerency by land and sea is inconsistent with the Armistice Agreement and the Charter of the United Nations.

We urge a reassertion by the parties of their obligations to each other in terms of non-belligerency, pacific settlement and respect for political independence and territorial integrity; and we await the Egyptian reply to this proposal.

We advocate, after six years of armistice, a serious effort to make a transition towards permanent peace.

To any attempt at stabilization and pacification my Government will lend the full weight of its support.

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